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Svetlana Inherited Her Tragic Flaw

By Robert C. Tucker

STALIN'S daughter has taken leave of the West, which gave her refuge after she took leave of Russia in 1966 to go to India. She has gone back to Moscow, where she has voiced angry recriminations against everyone from her American ex-husband and the CIA to her lawyers and publishers.

On all this hangs a small story that may reveal something about this deeply unhappy woman who seems driven by an inner demon to turn against places where she has been and to condemn and cast out of her life various people with whom she has associated, thereby winding up in a prison of self-created loneliness.

When she made Princeton her first American home in 1967, I was among those who became acquainted with her. As a scholar working on an interpretive history of the Stalin era, I made my biographical interest in her father clear to her at the outset.

Her book, "Twenty Letters to a Friend," which she wrote in Russia and arranged to send out to India before going there herself, appeared in English translation in late 1967. As a biographer I was grateful for information that the book contained on Stalin's little-known private life and character as Svetlana had observed it up close.

EXCERPTED

Robert C. Tucker, emeritus professor of politics at Princeton University, is author of "Stalin as Revolutionary: A Study in History and Personality."